



STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Presentations. The State Soil Conservation Committee met on July 28 in Des Moines. The meeting was called to order by Dr. Dale Farnham, committee chairperson, and the following information was presented:

- Stefan Gailans, [Practical Farmers of Iowa](#), talked about cover crop projects that have been completed by farmers. One project varied the time of terminating the cover crop prior to planting the soybean crop. Three farmers terminated a portion of the rye cover crop 10 to 14 days prior to planting soybeans, and the other portion was terminated the day before planting soybeans. Although soybean yields did not change dramatically, two farmers reported there was more residue with the late termination, which held the soil in place and decreased the amount of weeds.
- Jamie Benning, Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach, provided an update on a study related to the [economic value of cover crops](#). Study data was collected from nine farmers who had been using cover crops since 2009 and data from farms in two random counties. The study concluded that soils with higher organic matter are more productive, and the use of cover crops has greater benefits in areas that have high rates of soil erosion.
- Jamie Benning and Claire Lindahl, Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), talked about the [Retain Initiative](#) that gives farmers a water quality testing kit for testing nitrate levels in their water. The kit includes a booklet that details how to use the kit and testing strips.

Committee Discussion. The committee discussed and approved the following:

- Funding of \$100,000 from the Soil Conservation Cost Share Fund to pay for a pilot project on the feasibility of conducting a reverse auction when allocating cost share funding. This was enacted by the Legislature in [HF 2454](#) (FY 2017 Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Act).
- The Yankee Run Watershed in Cedar County as a Priority Watershed.
- The five-year conservation plan for the Howard Soil and Water Conservation District.
- The FY 2018 budget request for the Division of Soil Conservation:

Soil Conservation Division FY 2018 Budget Request		
Program	FY 2017 Appropriation	FY 2018 Budget Request
Soil Conservation Account	\$ 2,800,000	\$ 7,500,000
Water Quality Initiative	9,600,000	30,000,000
Soil Conservation Cost Share	6,750,000	10,000,000
Urban Conservation	0	1,000,000
Watershed Protection Fund	900,000	2,700,000
Conservation Reserve Enhance. Program	1,000,000	2,500,000
Conservation Reserve Program	1,000,000	2,000,000
Agriculture Drainage Well	1,920,000	4,600,000
Farm Demonstration Program	625,000	650,000
Loess Hills	600,000	600,000
Total	\$ 25,195,000	\$ 61,550,000

Next Meeting. The next meeting will be held on August 30 in Des Moines, after the conclusion of the [Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Conference](#). The [Iowa Farm Progress Show](#) will be held in Boone on the same day, and members were encouraged to attend. For additional information about the committee, refer to the committee's [website](#).

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